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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 003465

SIPDIS

FOR NEA/ARP BERNIS, INR KIRSCH, S/CT MILLER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [I2](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: KUWAITI FM SAYS FUEL ISSUE RESOLVED; DRIVER ISSUE
PENDING

REF: A. KUWAIT 3391

[B](#). USUN 2145

[C](#). PARTO 11

[D](#). KUWAIT 3262

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron. Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a 50-minute meeting on October 4, Ambassador and Kuwaiti FM Dr. Mohammed committed to continued fuel for U.S. forces in Iraq, to be supplied at "close to zero" cost. The FM said that signing of a contract was a necessary political/legal formality and asked that U.S. team be sent. On the issue of Kuwait's ban on Filipino and Indian drivers crossing into Kuwait, he said Kuwait advised India of the economic ramifications of a ban on the travel of their nationals to Iraq and expected the GOI and other countries with travel bans would soon come around. The GOK was not ready to unilaterally remove the Kuwaiti restrictions on Indian and Filipino drivers. He was complimentary of BMENA meetings in New York and applauded the U.S. for modulating its approach on reform. He said Kuwait looked forward to the Cairo conference of Iraqi neighbors and welcomed U.S. input on conference goals and objectives. Dr. Mohammed did not offer any comment on rumors of leadership changes in Kuwait. (An exchange on counterterrorism is reported separately.)
End Summary.

Fuel to Flow

[1](#)2. (S) Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah opened the meeting by reviewing his September 23 meeting with the Secretary on the margins of the UNGA. Regarding fuel for coalition forces in Iraq, Dr. Mohammed said he explained to the Secretary that Kuwait's request for a contract was a legal, constitutional requirement. Absent an agreement, there is no legal umbrella for the provision of fuel for use by U.S. forces outside of Kuwait, a situation that exposes the GOK to criticism from the National Assembly. Dr. Mohammed emphasized the GOK does not want the bilateral relationship subject to parliamentary debate. As a result, the GOK requested a contract covering three elements: quantity of fuel, duration of GOK fuel supply to coalition forces, and cost. He said the matter was legal, not financial, and that the fuel cost should be "close to zero." He said the Council of Ministers had addressed the matter October 3 and that the Kuwaiti Embassy in Washington would be instructed to convey this message in Washington. He also welcomed the visit of a U.S. delegation to finalize the agreement. The Ambassador thanked Dr. Mohammed for the GOK's generosity and flexibility, and said a delegation would visit as soon as possible.

Driver Issue Still Floating

[1](#)3. (C) Turning to another matter affecting coalition operations in Iraq, the Ambassador asked Dr. Mohammed for clarification of the GOK's position on travel bans to Iraq of Indian, Nepali, and Filipino drivers. The Ambassador said the Embassy understood from the MFA that the GOK had decided not to enforce the ban, yet this decision had not apparently been taken at the level of the Prime Minister and communicated to Ministry of Interior personnel at border crossings. Dr. Mohammed noted that China recently requested that the GOK prevent its nationals from crossing the border into Iraq, and India intended to begin annotating passports to make them invalid for entry into Iraq. Dr. Mohammed commented that the matter was complex; Kuwait needed to make a good faith effort to carry out requests from other governments since it had previously requested India and Syria, for example, to enforce selective travel bans on Kuwaiti nationals. (Note: Press reports in Kuwait on Monday indicated that the Syrians had picked up some Kuwaitis attempting to cross into Iraq.) Nevertheless, the FM said he raised the issue with Indian FM Natwar Singh in New York, stressing that ample security measures are in place and that in the end, Indian families would suffer from the lack of income. Playing to regional sensitivities, he told the Indian FM that it would be unfortunate if Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, and Africans took all the jobs currently held by Indian nationals. He felt the GOI would likely reconsider

its position and believed that explaining the security measures in place to the involved governments would help them to change policies driven by domestic politics. Dr. Mohammed also suggested that the companies involved hire Iraqis when possible. (Comment: The GOK wants some cover from the Indian and Philippine Governments before ending its restrictions. Meanwhile Kuwaiti transport companies may be making arrangements for other drivers.)

BMENA Positive

14. (U) Dr. Mohammed praised the BMENA meeting in New York saying the evolving U.S. approach allowed participating countries to claim ownership of their reform efforts. He said countries were off to a good start and the GOK looked forward to future meetings. He expressed regret that Lebanon did not take part in the session on BMENA.

The Cairo Conference?

15. (SBU) He said he welcomed information on U.S. goals for the Cairo conference, explaining that other countries looked to Kuwait, as GCC chair and the first country to invite Iraq to a regional conference, for guidance. He wanted to be on the same page as the U.S. Ambassador told the FM that we would pass on any additional information that is available and endeavor to consult with Kuwait as the planning develops.

Border MOU

16. (SBU) Ambassador pressed for conclusion of the MOU under negotiation on Kuwait/Iraq border modalities. Dr. Mohammed promised to speak to the Minister of Interior to try to get action on the draft, agreeing that it offered advantages to both the U.S. and Kuwait.

Other Issues

17. (U) The Ambassador asked that Kuwait do everything possible to make sure that coalition ships were not charged port expenses, as had been previously agreed, and mentioned current case of a Ukrainian ship that had been charged. The Ambassador said that he looked forward to pursuing the objectives of the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with the Minister of Commerce and others. Ambassador noted that the discussions about the release of a Kuwaiti detained at Guantanamo are proceeding in Washington, including some consideration of Kuwait's request for a second citizen. The FM did not react (at all) when asked whether he wanted to comment on the reports of possible leadership shifts in Kuwait.

18. (U) Baghdad: Minimize considered.
LeBaron